

Bad Coffee, Bad Business

Bad coffee, mind numbingly dull surroundings, overpriced food... there are lots of the complaints levelled at Starbucks and other coffee chains, but these are the more innocent accusations you can make. The rampant spread of Starbucks outlets across our cities, including its massive growth in Sheffield in the past few years, is not only making them increasingly similar and boring, it is indicative of much more objectionable things. We mustn't forget the predatory practices that Starbucks employ. Much like Tescos and other chain stores, Starbucks is known for its attempts to take over the commercial life of areas by running at a loss to strangle out other smaller independent businesses. This is a direct attack on local people who lack the financial and legal power to resist this sort of attack and is completely unacceptable. The chain is also known for cracking down on attempts at unionization by workers



despite its attempts to appear worker-friendly. It has consistently victimized those who have worked for better working conditions and better wages. Despite this workers in New York stores have taken on the coffee giant and despite a protracted legal battle have started to win concessions against the corporation. Unions may not always provide the right answers,

but grassroots organising such as that of the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) show that if working people stick together and take control of their workplace we can fight back.

Baristas United is a union for all coffee shop workers, whether behind the counter, cleaning or delivering.

Baristas United is part of the Shop Workers Industrial Union of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW union is controlled directly by its members and fights for better conditions today. The IWW also insists that working people are entitled to everything they produce, instead of getting a meagre share while company directors are worth millions.

No matter how good the job is, united you can do better!

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Fargate Review

Sheffield has many attractions and amusements to offer, Fargate review aims to provide an entertaining overview of city attractions you won't find in your average tourist guide. This issue we look at two (of the many!!) identi-kit coffee chain stores that are slowly taking over our city centre:



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!

Answers on the back of a postcard. The first reader to spot five differences wins the fabulous prize of a new Starbucks opening near them... And so does everyone else.

The Fargate Speaker

No Nonsense.

Freedom • Equality • Autonomy
Free/Donation

In this Issue: Bus Fare Hikes • Whatever Happened to a Quiet Pint? • Identi-kit stores • Starbucks • The Economic Crisis for Dummies • Sport

Safe from who?

The phrase "nanny state" gets thrown around a lot, but it's difficult not to use it when talking about the recent Operation Staysafe, when as part of a £100m government action plan, coppers were expected to start acting like Mary Poppins with sillier hats, rounding up young people and escorting them off the streets. In one weekend, cops "engaged" with 1251 young people, including 184 in Yorkshire and the Humber alone. "Engaged" meaning that they were stopped and spoken to but not found to be committing any crime or in any danger, meaning that they were stopped because...well, they're young, so that means they must've been up to something dodgy, right? Perhaps this is part of the government's commitment to equal opportunities - for years if you wanted to get hassled by cops for no good reason, you needed to be black or Asian, whereas nowadays all young people can enjoy the experience of being pushed around by strangers in uniform. Of course, youth crime and anti-social behaviour are real issues, but it's worth understanding why they happen. If kids get involved in petty crime because they feel a general sense of dissatisfaction and resentment, does anyone really think that grabbing them off the streets and treating them like criminals when they're just hanging around is going to help? Being searched by the police can be a very intimidating experience, especially



for young people who might not know their legal rights, and it can help encourage a mentality of seeing all outsiders, and especially all adults, as enemies - in other words, exactly the attitude that causes anti-social behaviour. This kind of excessive behaviour isn't an isolated incident - over the last few years, we've seen public spaces in Sheffield grow more and more closed off and

regulated. The eviction of the Matilda Social Centre, and other, more short-lived attempts to set up social centres, are just one example of this. We've also seen an increase in CCTV and other similar forms of control. And this isn't just a local issue: the government's plans for ID cards and national databases show the kind of total power over our lives they hope to get if we'll let them.

No Fare!

This feels like one of the easiest arguments I'll ever make: does anyone actually like paying ridiculous amounts of money to use the bus? No? Right, that's this article sorted, I'm off down the pub.

But seriously, it's starting to seem like every time we get the bus it's costing more and more. This isn't just a minor annoyance, it's a serious problem. For one thing, bus users tend to be people who can't afford

cars in the first place, so the people most affected by fare increases are those who can afford them the least. Meanwhile, those who have access to cars aren't going to be tempted away by overpriced buses, so fare increases mean more cars on the road, and so more traffic congestion, making it harder for everyone to get around. And, without to come across like an annoying preachy hippy, it's

continued overleaf ...

Rip Off Buses

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really not that great for the planet we live on either.

This would all just be pointless whining, if it wasn't for the fact that things don't have to be this way. Like so many other things, buses seem totally outside of our control, but they actually only run because of us – the users who pay for the service to run, and the drivers (and other workers) who actually keep them going. Only a few years ago, Sheffield saw the beginnings of a movement of

passengers and drivers, when the We Want Our Buses Back campaign scared the bus bosses into freezing fares for a year (and then became a victim of its own success, because there wasn't much else to protest about after that). Maybe it's time to start rebuilding that spirit, so we can remind the Stagecoach and First bosses who really keeps the system going? It won't be easy, but it's got to be better than paying silly money just to ride a sodding bus.

Letters to Fargate

Do you have an opinion on any of the issues covered in this bulletin? Would you like Fargate to publicise your news? Are there any local issues or campaigns you think Fargate should cover?

Contact Us!
thefargatespeaker@gmail.com

Fargate poses the question

Whatever Happened to a Quiet Pint?

Am I getting old or did a quiet pint suddenly go chronically out of fashion? Forgive me for having a bit of a rose-tinted view of the past, but don't you just long for the smoke-filled dens that used to be the staple of consumption in bygone years? Yes, they were filled with tack ripped off from the local car-boot sale, yeah you had to negotiate with the "career drinker" who probably soiled himself around mid-morning on your way to the bar and yes, if you were anything other than a straight, white, middle-aged male you probably stuck out like a sore thumb, BUT at least you could hold a conversation! It was in pubs like these that radicals would rabble-rouse over a few pints, where anarchists would meet to conspire against the bosses and men of privilege and where anyone can debate pretty much anything for hours on end.

Drinking these days is an entirely different procedure. The pub is dying out and our high streets are now filling up with the dreaded "sports bar". These places, like some crazy new method of US torture, appear designed to bombard and overwhelm all the senses at once.

Packed to the hilt and removed of all chairs you are forced to pivot uncomfortably around that tiny bit of wooden ledge they have helpfully provided to precariously balance



your pint. Unable to communicate with other human beings, if it isn't the 24-hour news coverage, or the three sports events that are covered simultaneously, it'll be the latest chart topper blasted at maximum volume that will finally shatter your nerves. In such a situation one is

forced to drink hard and drink heavy. And don't get me wrong, I am not a complete miser. Get me to a club, free party or rave and I'll flail about like the next berk. But it's not like I want to do that every single time I settle down for a pint. I mean when was the last time you saw someone throwing shapes in a J.D. Wetherspoons? Even the "nuclear option" for Saturday night drinking is under threat! In desperate times it was at least viable to have a quick whip-around, pop down to bargain booze and settle for a midnight picnic in your local park. But Sheffield town developers' war against anything remotely green has seen a lot of the city's parks disappear. Devonshire Green, a classic haunt for drunk punks and stoned bohemians, looks like some crazy paving has exploded over the end of it and is now an alcohol-free zone. The picturesque Tudor square is now

just a giant lump of tarmac. The Winter Gardens are heavily policed to ensure that anyone too young/dirty/odd looking/fun is excluded. Is it really too much to ask to have a space where I can just sit and socialise with my friends in peace ... even just for a little bit?

Economic Crisis for Dummies

How could they get it so wrong?

It wasn't all that long ago that our Chancellor come Prime minister Gordon was still blowing his own trumpet at having ended the 'boom and bust' era. We all know how the story ends, but how did they get it SO WRONG??

Economic modelling of the future relies on many assumptions, but mostly that market growth can and will be continuous and infinite. Any mathematician or physicist will tell you that nothing can be infinite, and more importantly that assumptions can never be relied on until proven. So why do they make these assumptions?

Well, to start with, economics is more political ideology than "science". Economists have traditionally aligned with the ruling classes, who had vested interests in the capitalist system and the inequalities it brings. The political ideology that property and exploitation were legitimate seemed only natural to them. After all, those in power naturally assume their system to be the best.

So what actually caused our current 'hiccup' in the banking system? Well, to put it bluntly, bankers got greedy. They (logically) assumed that people who couldn't afford a mortgage

would be able to keep up with payments. (logical isn't it?) Then, they devised mechanisms to sell on the debt to another bank, thus absolving themselves of the risks, and freeing up money to lend to more people who couldn't afford the interest payments.

Why would they make such dangerous moves you ask? Well because someone upon high would be giving them a big fat bonus for smashing their targets. Never mind that both the target and result were completely artificial, the bankers get paid all the same.

Many would argue that this was simply proof that humans follow the mindless, self-interested approach that right-wing economists believe is our natural instinct. However,



numerous studies have demonstrated that the only two groups in society that consistently follow this approach are economists themselves, and psychopaths.

Consider this last point, if economists were to apply their basic premise of "supply and demand" to their own jobs, what demand are they fulfilling? Is it for an unbiased model of human interactions? Or is it to make assumptions that fit with the view of those already in a privileged position?

Next Issue: Who Pays? and How to Fight Back!

Sport: Sheffield Steelers top the League

They may not be the most popular team in Sheffield but local ice hockey club, The Sheffield Steelers, have been dominating the national league. Despite a shaky start, the Steelers have been on strong form since the new year and after taking twelve consecutive victories (to only be broken by a 3-2 defeat against Coventry) they look set to end the season in the top spot.

An unfortunate product of smaller crowds for ice hockey in this country is that clubs have to rely on business sponsors to a greater extent than more popular sports. Fortunately tickets prices have remained low, but the over-sponsorship of the sport does cheapen the game. This is often apparent in the game commentary "... as he passes the puck

(sponsored by Esso) into the penalty zone (brought to you by Specsavers)..." - you get the general idea. You have to feel sorry for some of the players who can barely make enough room for their team's logo for the various sponsored patches and stickers they have to shove all over their gear. Nevertheless, we salute our Yorkshire lads and wish them the best for next season.